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Regional News



Central Asian Exposition for Small and Medium Businesses. On April 18 in Almaty, USAID's Regional Trade Liberalization and Customs Project (RTLCC) organized a trade exposition to close the first phase of the Project's Export Partnership Initiative. Participating small and medium businesses exhibited their products and finalized agreements to expand their exports. Participants had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with other participants' products and learn about exporting. At the event, 12 textile enterprises and business associations from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan created an export partnership group and signed a memorandum of understanding and cooperation. The exposition concluded the training phase of the Export Partnership Initiative, with approximately 60 businesses better equipped to compete in international markets. USAID's Export Partnership Initiative will continue to serve businesses

looking to increase their exports by supporting policy reforms and marketing drives, and facilitating cooperation among exporters. (Photo: Tapio Naula, Deputy Chief of Party, RTLCC, displays Kyrgyz textile industry's products)



Simplifying International Trade: Completed Reforms and Plans through 2012. On April 22 in Almaty, USAID's Regional Trade Liberalization and Customs Project (RTLCC), in cooperation with Kazakhstan's Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MEDT) conducted a conference to discuss efforts underway to simplify trade regulations and procedures in Kazakhstan. The discussion centered on Kazakhstan's efforts to improve its performance in the World Bank's Doing Business – Trading Across Borders indicator. Kazakhstan ranks 181st out of the 183 countries surveyed. These efforts will spur economic growth by making cross-border trade less complicated and more efficient. The conference familiarized the business community with recent legislative changes, and presented the government's reform plans through the end of 2012. MEDT Vice Minister Suleimenov discussed the results of MEDT's Working Group

on the Trading Across Borders indicator. Deputy Chairman of the Customs Control Committee (CCC) Duissebayev spoke about CCC's progress in implementing a single window system for import/export operations. Private sector representatives asked questions and suggested how to further simplify trade procedures, which would reduce costs for Kazakhstan's consumers and make exporters more competitive. (Photo: Anar Shaikenova, RTLCC Kazakhstan Country Manager, at the trade conference)

Kazakhstan

World Tuberculosis (TB) Day Events Draw Attention to Alarming Rise in MDR-TB Cases. In March, World TB Day events in Almaty organized by USAID drew attention to the alarming rise of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR TB) in Kazakhstan. Although general TB incidence and mortality for the past five years in Kazakhstan has declined, multi-drug resistant TB incidence grew 19% in 2010 and almost three times over the last five years. In prison TB hospitals, the MDR TB proportion among new cases of TB has reached 40%. Public health experts expressed serious concern about the proposed amnesty of 6,000 prisoners in 2011. Although some growth of MDR TB can be attributed to the introduction of new diagnostic methods through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria grants, this growth of MDR TB should be considered as a public health emergency that requires the appropriate response from the Government and donors.



USAID Works to Reduce Tension. On March 10, the USAID Country Representative Carey Gordon and the Mayor of Bishkek participated in a public commemoration of their joint initiative to renovate a soccer field in a micro-district of Bishkek. Local government officials spearheaded the renovation of the community soccer field in direct response to last summer's events and the ensuing instability. The initiative was created in an effort to rally community members' participation with the sole purpose of reducing tension and instability at a crucial time in Kyrgyzstan's transition to a stable and peaceful democracy. The project will demonstrate to the broader community the local government's commitment to addressing issues of concern to local residents. The renovated soccer field will help strengthen the community and give its members, and in particular youth, a positive outlet to participate in healthy extracurricular activities. *(Photo: Youth enjoying the renovated soccer field)*



Registration and Exam Office Opening in Jalal-Abad. Replicating a similar activity from Osh city, the Registration and Exam Office (REO) in Jalal-Abad city hosted an opening event on March 11, which USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives refurbished with 20 new desktop computers, licensed software, a printer and a copier. The core function of REO is to provide vehicle registrations, vehicle title documents, license plates and driver licenses. With the new equipment and software, the REO's vehicle registration and driver license examination department will be able to introduce and integrate new technologies, and thereby administer exams in an unbiased and transparent manner providing impartial services to Jalal-Abad's multi-ethnic communities. *(Photo: Registration and Exam Office staff using USAID donated computers)*



Increasing Access to Information on Tax Relief Legislation to Revitalize Entrepreneurship in Southern Kyrgyzstan. On April 6, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives, through its grant to Public Fund "Invest Consult," conducted a seminar for business owners in Osh city to review government legislation that provides special tax exemptions for small- and medium-sized businesses following the June 2010 events. This grant support is aimed to increase access to information about commercial tax relief in Osh, Jalalabad, Kara-Suu cities through similar seminars. Firsthand information about new national tax relief legislation procedures, tax and social benefits, and deferments and discounts for credit repayments will help business owners make more informed decisions about their business operations. At the end of May 2011, two conferences will present findings from each seminar and information about tax relief legislation for the wider business community, thereby revitalizing commercial activity in southern Kyrgyzstan and building trust in government services. *(Photo: Jalalabad entrepreneurs learn about tax relief program)*



USAID Engaging At-risk Youth in Bishkek to Support Peace and Build Trust between Citizens. Throughout April, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives initiated eight activities to engage at-risk youth including a marathon, two-week sports fair, and football tournament, as well as hosting the final match in a soccer tournament that will bring together teams from 48 volatile neighborhoods around Bishkek. Other youth-focused activities in April included short-term jobs employing 1,000 youth to rejuvenate large community spaces (sports facilities and other community infrastructure primarily used by young people), an arts festival, a youth entrepreneurship development project, and the establishment of youth community-action groups to mobilize youth for engaging with their local governments. These activities were designed to reduce the likelihood that disaffected youth from Bishkek's marginalized periphery could become embroiled in potential violence

around the anniversary of the Bakiev government's downfall. The youth who live in these peripheral communities lack access to jobs and education and, thus, are prime targets for those seeking to foment unrest during times of political turbulence. As violence involving many unemployed youth rapidly eclipsed last year's political protests in Bishkek, many believe these same youth are at-risk for similar mobilization and manipulation. *(Photo: Bishkek "novostroika" or "un-registered settlement" youth are employed and helping to improve community infrastructure)*



Launch of Seed Assistance Voucher Program. On April 20, USAID and the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic officially launched the Seed Assistance Voucher Program. USAID awarded \$4.1 million to increase improved seed use in Kyrgyzstan during the 2011 spring planting season. The program was jointly designed by the governments and will be jointly implemented by a USAID implementer and the Kyrgyz Ministry of Agriculture. The program will provide seeds to approximately 30,000 farmers, 160 agricultural cooperatives and 81 seed enterprises in all seven oblasts. Each farmer, cooperative and seed farm will receive a voucher that will be exchanged for a specific commodity at the seed distribution point. The program is intended to supply improved seeds of barley, potato, safflower and sugar beet for the spring planting season starting this month. *(Photo: Chargé d'Affaires Larry Memmott hands over a bag of seeds to the first farmer-recipient)*



Quality Health Care Project. On April 21, USAID celebrated the launch of its Quality Health Care Project in Kyrgyzstan. USAID Acting Country Director Lawrence Held and State Secretary of the Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic Paiza Suyumbaeva offered introductory remarks before the screening of an informational film on the project, followed by a reception. USAID presented a donation of 28 computers to the Mandatory Health Insurance Fund at this event. Since 1994, USAID has partnered with the Kyrgyz Ministry of Health to develop and enact widespread health reforms, which have transformed health care in post-independence Kyrgyzstan. USAID and the Kyrgyz Ministry of Health have initiated legislative and financing reforms, introduced and emphasized the importance of evidence-based medicine, created the field of family medicine and further developed the primary health care sector to provide high quality and affordable health care to the Kyrgyz people. Over the next

five years, the Quality Health Care Project will work to further improve the health status of Central Asians by building the capacity of public health systems to better meet the needs of vulnerable groups. During its first two years, the Project will build upon the successes of past USAID projects and health reform activities by continuing to improve access to quality public health and primary health care services. *(Photo: Family Group Practice doctor E.Asanbaeva and her patient B.Kurmankulova at the launch event to thank USAID for helping to improve access and quality of primary health care services)*

Government Hosts International Agrarian Reform Conference. In April, President Emomali Rahmon opened a conference attended by senior government officials and international donors and the diplomatic community, noting the substantial progress that has been made in agriculture reform. With a consolidated agriculture reform strategy and action plan document presented at the conference, the Government committed to specific land reforms, including secure and fully tradable land use rights; a comprehensive approach to water sector reform that separates regulation from operations, management along river basins rather than administrative boundaries, and an integrated water resource management approach; and a range of other agricultural reform measures. At the closing session, Chargé d'Affaires Necia Quast and USAID Deputy Regional Mission Director Clay Epperson highlighted the significant U.S. role in supporting agricultural reform and emphasized the link between agricultural reform and food security.

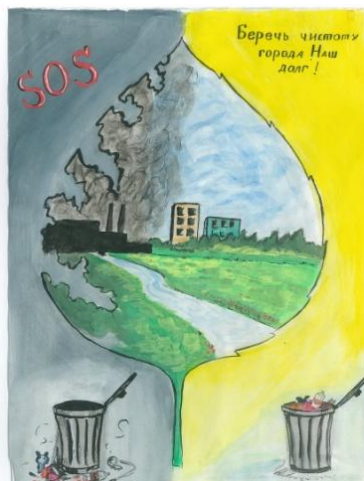


USAID Responds to Flooding in Unstable Region of Tajikistan. Ambassador Ken Gross officially handed over a foot bridge to a community in the city of Gharm in Tajikistan's Rasht valley that was rebuilt with the assistance of USAID's Tajikistan Stability Enhancement Program. Last summer the bridge was destroyed by a flood, which severely damaged villages, livestock and agricultural land. The foot bridge was rebuilt with in-kind contributions from the local community and support from the local government. It will connect people in the community to shops, health clinics, schools and mosques. Besides the foot bridge, the Program also reinforced 150 meters of river bank and cleared 400 meters of stream channel that had been completely filled with enormous boulders as a result of flood. These measures will help prevent damage in future floods. *(Photo: Ambassador Ken Gross with local citizens)*



Afghan Border Villages Get Clean Drinking Water with USAID Support. On March 17 Ambassador Ken Gross officially handed over a water supply system that was rebuilt with the assistance of USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance in the Panj district near Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan. This was part of a broader effort by the U.S. Government to help victims of severe floods in spring 2009. After providing immediate humanitarian aid, USAID set out to help the districts affected by flooding to recover in the longer term and reduce their vulnerability to future disasters. The project increased access to basic social services and rehabilitated social infrastructure in Panj and Qumsangir districts. The project built 36 new shelters in the village of Tojiksoy for households displaced by the floods. The project was implemented

under a \$577,000 grant from USAID to the international non-governmental organization ACTED in cooperation with local governments and communities. *(Photo: Ambassador Ken Gross (right) and Jeffrey Lehrer, USAID/Tajikistan Country Director (center), talk with local community leaders)*



USAID Improves Sanitary Conditions In Tursunzoda. The USAID Central Asia Local Development Initiative and Tursunzoda City Chairman supported an infrastructure activity designed to improve solid waste collection and disposal services in Tursunzoda district. Since April 2010 the USAID Local Development Initiative has worked closely with local authorities from six districts in building the capacity of officials and deputies to improve the quality of waste management and other services delivered to the population, and improve citizen cooperation with local authorities at both the district and community levels. *(Photo: A child's drawing on improving sanitary conditions in Tursunzoda)*

USAID Supports Study of Potable Water in Tajikistan. The Government of Tajikistan presented the initial findings of a study of the country's potable water systems. The study was conducted by the State Communal Services Enterprise and was jointly supported by USAID and a Swiss-funded Oxfam project. The study found that 57% of Tajikistan's rural population has no access to clean drinking water and that 25% of the population drinks from irrigation canals. USAID is supporting institutional reforms to the Communal Services Enterprise to strengthen its capacity to deliver water, sanitation and other communal services at the local level.



USAID Trains Water Engineers in Tajikistan. USAID Tajikistan Safe Drinking Water Project provided eight students from the Tajikistan Technical University, Department of Water Engineering, with hands-on training in modern water engineering practices. The internship provided students with practical courses on water system design using the latest software and technology. It helped prepare the students for their eventual professional assignments, and increase access to safe drinking water in the rural communities of Tajikistan served by the Project. *(Photo: Students during their practical classes)*



Community Connections Study Tour to United States. At the end of March broadcast media representatives from Tajikistan returned from a three-week training program in Kentucky and Indiana on the Community Connections professional exchange program funded by USAID. The group met with a cross-section of American broadcasters, both public and private, representing large and small markets and radio and television. Program activities included practical training on programming, fundraising and funding mechanisms for socially oriented content, as well as advertising and media sales, and the outsourcing of service networks within the U.S. broadcast media system. The issues inherent in programming for smaller markets and low-budget outlets were of major

interest to the Tajik broadcasters. With their U.S. counterparts, the Tajik participants generated new ideas for developing original programming of relevance to rural communities and developing content with limited resources. *(Photo: Broadcast media group share impressions of the training)*



USAID Program Trains Afghans in Cross Border Vocational Education Project. USAID staff recently visited the Cross Border Vocational Education Project in Tajikistan, which currently trains 90 students from Afghanistan and facilitates their international qualification in English, IT, and other vocational subjects. The project offers a unique model of cross-border cooperation and has demonstrated its effectiveness in providing critical education opportunities that will lead to jobs for Afghan citizens. *(Photo: Afghan students studying in Tajikistan)*



Training Pharmacists in Tajikistan to Help End TB. The USAID Dialogue on HIV and TB Project conducted a one-day training event for practicing pharmacists, improving their skills as key agents in the battle to detect and treat tuberculosis (TB) in March. Twenty pharmacists from Dushanbe and other regions of Tajikistan learned to recognize TB symptoms and refer those with symptoms to local TB-testing facilities. The training helped pharmacists identify TB symptoms and taught skills for counseling and referring at-risk customers to healthcare facilities. Participants learned about TB and the consequences of inaccurate treatment. *(Photo: Pharmacists role play using the newly acquired communication and referral skills)*

HR Management Training for HIV NGOs in Tajikistan. The USAID Quality Health Care Project conducted human resource management training sessions for 20 NGOs from around Tajikistan that work to prevent the spread of HIV among vulnerable populations. The skills-building workshop was designed to strengthen the ability of NGOs to offer services to at-risk populations and to address the high rates of turnover among those who provide services to vulnerable populations, including better recruitment and reimbursement strategies and improved management techniques. The Quality Health Care Project is providing follow-up technical support and mentoring to NGO participants to help them implement the skills learned in the workshop.



USAID Assists in Nationwide Polio Immunization Campaign. On April 18-22 USAID assisted in a nationwide polio immunization campaign in Tajikistan. Over 1,100,000 children ages 0-5 were expected to receive immunizations across the country. USAID is providing financial support for the campaign as well as technical advice and monitoring. Last year USAID assisted in conducting six immunization campaigns that halted the most significant polio outbreak in decades. *(Photo: Children receiving the oral polio vaccination)*



USAID Fosters Public Health Improvement through Community Connections. Ten public health educators from Tajikistan returned from a three-week USAID sponsored Community Connections exchange program in the United States. Necia Quast, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires, welcomed the group. Participants visited the University of Alabama's School of Medicine in Birmingham to learn about medical education programs and were introduced to the selection, application and evaluation of instructional strategies in healthcare education and staff development. With their U.S. counterparts, participants developed new perspectives on their work in Tajikistan, including how to improve public health curricula at undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate medical educational institutions and in community outreach programs. *(Photo: Shoista Sagdieva (left) and Khuriya Khisamova (right) share their impressions of the program)*

USAID Defends NGOs in Tajikistan. In Tajikistan, USAID backed an advocacy campaign in support of civil society. The campaign gained agreement from the Tajikistan Tax Committee to temporarily withhold the implementation of the new Tax Code that would have hurt non-profit organizations. The tax amendments were adopted in December 2010 and placed additional taxes on all types of legal entities without special consideration for non-profits, most of which struggle to find financing. As part of an ongoing USAID project to provide legal assistance to NGOs, the International Center for Non-Profit Law helped civil society groups to hold a number of meetings with the Tax Committee and Tajikistan's Parliament. The issue is not yet permanently resolved, but there is hope that the Government will agree to amend the Tax Code to exclude NGOs from this new tax provision.



Agriculture Technology Program. The USAID Agriculture Technology Program over the past two months has ramped up its activities, including trainings for artificial insemination and greenhouse management, renovations for demonstration greenhouses, and the import of semen for an improved breed for local livestock farmers. For the greenhouse improvement program, renovations were made to partner farms in Mary and Lebap, and in April trainings took place at both facilities for disease identification and treatment. In Lebap, about half of the participants were women, while in Mary the project saw participating farmers range in age from 15 to 70. For the livestock component, the animal health training of trainers in March included 10 veterinarians from all five regions of Turkmenistan who will take what they have learned and share it in trainings that they themselves will conduct in their respective regions this spring and summer. The

artificial insemination training of trainers for veterinarians from all the country's regions began April 11 and will conclude May 26. Using 700 doses of semen acquired from progeny tested Holstein and Brown Swiss sires, the training program is being led by local breeding specialist Katya Chikhnyaeva and focuses on the physical techniques to accurately test for an existing pregnancy, use of artificial insemination tools for impregnating cows, and testing to verify successful conception. Upon completion, the 10 participants will return to their respective regions where they will train 10 other veterinarians in artificial insemination techniques, resulting in approximately 50 trained veterinarians across the country. It is the project's goal to use these veterinarians to expand the quality of dairy cows and their milk production throughout Turkmenistan. *(Photo: Mr. Taniyev (left), project greenhouse partner in Mary, talks about his cabbage with Mr. Klichev, a trainer)*

Implementation of Internationally Compliant Accounting Standards. On April 20, USAID, in partnership with the Ministry of Finance of Turkmenistan, Chevron Nebitgaz B.V. Turkmenistan and the Union of Economists of Turkmenistan, completed a series of training courses in accounting and financial reporting for 215 accounting specialists from various ministries and agencies in Turkmenistan. These three-month courses support a Government of



Turkmenistan initiative to retrain chief accountants and other accounting specialists in ministries and state-owned enterprises in preparation for the 2014 implementation of new, internationally compliant, national accounting standards in Turkmenistan. Addressing the participants at the certificate handover ceremony, Director of USAID Turkmenistan Andrew Segars noted that, "the U.S. government is delighted to support accounting reforms in Turkmenistan and to see that our prior work in the area of introducing international financial reporting standards in Turkmenistan is now bearing more fruit." President of Chevron Nebitgaz B.V. Turkmenistan, Douglas Uchikura, stressed that, "his company is strongly committed to supporting Turkmenistan's further economic development, including the Government's efforts to implement international accounting standards."

Course participants are expected to gain international certification, simplifying Turkmenistan's ability to provide reliable reporting information to foreign investors and partners. *(Photo: Douglas Uchikura, President of Chevron Nebitgaz B.V. Turkmenistan, presents a certificate to a participant)*

Direct Grant for a Local NGO. On March 29, USAID awarded a direct grant to a local NGO in Uzbekistan to implement a new five-year counter-trafficking program, the “Reintegration for Trafficking Survivors” Project. The goal of the new program is two-fold: to provide long-term reintegration support to the victims of human trafficking and to strengthen the organizational, financial and management capacity of the local implementer. For the previous two years Uzbekistan has been placed on the State Department’s Trafficking in Persons Tier 2 Watch List. The Government of Uzbekistan has been taking significant steps to eliminate sex trafficking and will be a critical partner in the new program. The program will also complement the existing USAID/Central Asian Republics’ regional project on combating human trafficking in the area of victim protection.



World TB Day in Tashkent. In March, USAID’s Dialogue on HIV and TB Project conducted a four-day workshop on World TB Day for TB and HIV/TB co-infection prevention among most-at-risk populations (MARPs) in Tashkent. This was implemented in collaboration with Tashkent City’s AIDs Centre and National Republican AIDs Center, TB Dispenser and the Ministry of Health. The workshop included a scientific conference and concert. Along with receiving reliable information on topics related to TB and HIV/TB co-infection, MARPs were able to receive consultations from HIV and TB specialists as well as undergo an x-ray examination and other tests. It is expected that the assisted MARPs will disseminate information to others in order to increase public awareness of the growing threat of HIV and TB. *(Photo: Participants at the four-day workshop)*



Best Farmer of the Year. USAID beneficiaries were among the first, second and third place winners in the national “Tashabbus-2011” contest for “Best Farmer of the Year.” The event was held on March 30 in Tashkent and organized by Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan with the assistance of the Association of Farmers, and Association of Folk Craftsmen “Khunarmand.” Since 1996, the competition has included participation of entrepreneurs, farmers and craftsmen to compete for the prize offered by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The contest is considered an effective tool to support the development of entrepreneurship, primarily small businesses working in the agricultural sector. *(Photo: Participants at the national “Tashabbus-2011” contest)*



Study Tour on Food Safety and Quality Control. On April 11 Uzbek agriculturalists, sponsored by USAID’s Community Connections program, left for a three-week study tour in northern California on food safety and quality control. All participants, including director and manager-level representatives from agro-processors, the main food laboratory, the Ministry of Agriculture and farming entities, are beneficiaries and partners of USAID’s Agricultural Linkages (“AgLinks”) project in Uzbekistan. They will learn American food safety standards, testing methods and equipment for chemical (both inorganic and organic) substances, and biological and physical analysis. Technical visits will take place at the University of California at Davis, food laboratories, private farms, nurseries, orchards and well-established processors such as Campbell’s and Del Monte. This study tour will help to support the Government of Uzbekistan’s efforts to toughen food safety standards and requirements for food quality testing methods. *(Photo: Uzbek Community Connection delegation visits California fruit processing plant)*



USAID Expands Efforts to Increase Food Safety and Security. In order to provide virus-free, disease-tested, high-yield grafting material and root stocks to rejuvenate orchard cultivars in Uzbekistan, one of USAID's local partners under its Agricultural Linkages ("AgLinks") project took final delivery from the United States of over 1,500 grafting sticks, representing 45 different varieties of 6 stone fruits, and 10 pounds of seeds. The plant material was shipped from Foundation Plant Services, a self-supporting service department of the University of California, Davis. Per food safety and quality requirements, this material is only being put to immediate use on nurseries using the latest varieties to propagate and rejuvenate fruit orchard planting material to increase food security in Uzbekistan. The imported materials will be used to increase the sustainable production of these fruits and will be propagated over one to three agricultural seasons. In

subsequent years, these materials can have nationwide impact by increasing the availability and variety of fruits for domestic consumption and potentially export, thus meeting food security needs as well as generating income opportunities. *(Photo: Agriculture specialists in the field)*

USAID's Local Development Initiative Launches in Uzbekistan. USAID's Local Development Initiative, in coordination with the Institute for Study of Civil Society and the Academy of State and Social Construction, celebrated its launch on April 27, 2011. The main objective of the Local Development Initiative is to build the capacity of local governments, in communication and collaboration with constituents, to provide improved service delivery and governance. The project's efforts will focus on building local government capacity to improve service delivery and facilitate citizen involvement in planning and project implementation. It will run through September 2012. Improvement of local government capacity in providing public services is critical to Uzbekistan's long-term prosperity. By working together at the local level, communities and their governments can find sustainable solutions to many of their local-level needs.

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Or, contact Leanne MacDougall, Regional Development Outreach and Communications Specialist at: Imacdougall@usaid.gov

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Telling Our Story – How One Gram Made 100 Kilograms – Tajikistan: http://www.usaid.gov/stories/tajikistan/s_tj_potato_seeds.html

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